Jonathan Dilger

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Of Soccer

Soccer serves for entertainment, for fitness, and for ego. Its chief use for entertainment is in exhilaration and grief; for fitness, is in shortness of breath but the lack of any flab; and for ego is in having something bright and shiny to place on the shelf. For expert men can laugh at “foot fairies” and mock those who wear “short shorts,” but true realization of one’s self comes through the energy released on the pitch. To be surrounded day and night by the sport is obsession; to participate too often is overuse; to have to haughty and opinion of one’s self is arrogance, the antithesis or occasional partner of success. Crafty men condemn soccer, simple men admire it, and wise men use it; for they teach not of the score, but that it is a crucible for one’s skills, reactions, personality, and maturity; resulting in self-realization. Play not to appease a parent, or to simply be involved in the camaraderie, but of a genuine passion for a timeless game, and a desire to improve, and a need to win. Watch not to pass time or to learn about an attractive bird’s favorite to be able to engage her in future conversation, but to correct a manager’s tactical mistakes, tell your make you could have finished that chance the bloke just missed, or scream your lungs hoarse when your captain lifts the trophy or weep tears of dejectedness when relegation condemns you to the hurtful jibes of those of the opposition. Some matches are to be tasted and spit out, others are to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some matches are to be scrupulously scrutinized, as if the players are nothing compared to one’s own abilities; and some few are to be held on to forever, persevering in either infamy or celebrity. Playing maketh a full man; watching maketh a ready man; and a synthesis of both maketh an accomplished man, one who is enshrined in a tomb of the pastime and would prefer a Saturday morning pick-up in the park to brunch with his girlfriend, and watching a replay of last year’s cup final as an alternative to meeting her parents. Nay there is no fat man, no disconsolate woman at the cup final with her husband, no elderly woman on her death bed in Germany\*, who may not be saved, occupied, and renewed by the game of soccer. So if one has a misshapen body rolling with flab, one entertains animosities for an opposing city, one’s mind is filled with tactical knowledge, one’s nostrils filled with the smell of the pitch, and one’s legs with an itch to kick, one must play, watch, analyze, eat, sleep, and breathe soccer.

\* During the 2006 World Cup in Germany an elderly German woman’s heart was failing in the hospital. Doctor’s had known they would lose her for quite some time, and after an hour or so of fighting for her, they proclaimed her dead. Immediately upon this proclamation, the lady woke up and sat up in bed, asking if Germany had won its quarter final match. Informed that it had, she layed down and died once more. True story.